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ABSTRACT

In 1973 a survey of teachers (361) and administrators (41) in 44 very small West-Texas secondary schools revealed highly positive opinions about the small secondary school and its educative and social functions. The same survey sent to the same schools in 1983 revealed similar positive opinions. Surveys covered three items: (1) teaching and quality of education in small schools, (2) effects of school size on relationships and support, and (3) effects of school size on availability of resources. Teaching in a small secondary school was perceived as different from teaching in a large school, but less so in 1983. Opinions about small high schools providing quality education now and for the next 20 years showed a decidedly more positive shift in 1983 concerning the small size of a school necessarily limiting its curriculum. Item 2 revealed highly positive estimates of the effects of smallness in both surveys. Findings from Item 3 revealed that size was perceived as negatively affecting resources such as libraries. (AH)

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RC 014172

Quality of Education and Effects of Size in Small West-Texas High Schools: 1973 vs. 1983 Surveys

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In 1973 a survey of teachers and administrators in very small West-Texas secondary schools revealed highly positive opinions about the small secondary school and its educative and social functions. The same survey sent to the same schools in 1983 revealed similar positive opinions, but some shifts of opinion were evident in the 1983 survey.

The surveys covered three topics: (1) Teaching and Quality of Education in a Small School, (2) Effects of School Size on Relationships and Support, and (3) Effects of School Size on Availability of Resources. To determine if response patterns in 1983 were statistically different from those in 1983, the chi square technique for goodness of fit was used for each item on the questionnaire with the percentage of responses for 1973 used to determine the "expected frequencies" and the 1983 responses used for the "observed frequencies." Responses on the five-point scales were collapsed into three categories to compute the chi squares so that very small categories were eliminated. In 1973, an average of 361 teachers and administrators in 44 schools responded to each item, and in 1983, an average of 314 teachers and administrators in 32 schools responded to each item. Respondents in 1983 included 39 administrators,

218 teachers, and 13 teacher-administrators.

Schools surveyed are located in an area extending from the Panhandle to the Big Bend of Texas. Average enrollment of the secondary schools surveyed was 92 students, with 198 in the largest school and 18 in the smallest. The assessed valuation for the school districts surveyed ranged from a high of $1,305,348 to a low of $14,937. The mean average assessed valuation was $163,471, according to 1981-82 reports.

Table 1 shows the responses to statements regarding teaching and quality of education in a small secondary school. Teaching in a small secondary school was perceived as different from teaching in a large school, but less so in 1983 compared to 1973, and the chi square indicates a moderately significant difference at the .01 level. Opinions about small high schools providing quality education now and for the next 20 years showed a decidedly more positive shift in the 1983 survey with a significant chi square at the .001 level. An even more dramatic shift to the positive side of the scale was evident in opinions about the functioning of small high schools beyond the year 2000, with a significant chi square at the .001 level. Respondents showed a slight shift to the negative in 1983 in their opinions about the small size of a school necessarily limiting its curriculum, but a negative score on this item indicates that respondents did not agree with

size being a limiting condition; the chi square is moderately significant at the .01 level. Respondents showed a very high confidence in small high schools by agreeing, both in 1973 and 1983, that their own children could receive an adequate education in a very small secondary school. No significant difference was evident in their responses a decade apart regarding this feeling of personal confidence in small high schools.

.....
Insert Table 1 about here
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Table 2 shows the respondents' perceptions of the effects of school size on relationships and support. The scale of responses was from "Definitely negative" to "Definitely positive." On all five items, respondents revealed highly positive estimates of the effects of smallness, in both 1973 and 1983. Analysis of the chi squares showed no significant difference in responses to "Close teacher-pupil relationships," "Favorable community support of the school," both remaining highly positive. A slightly more positive rating was given in 1983 to "Probability of having small classes," with a moderately significant chi square at the .01 level of significance. The 1983 ratings for "Close pupil-pupil relationships were slightly less positive with a chi square of moderate significance at the .01 level. Less positive (but still

highly positive) opinions were evident for "Ability to change policy without going through several levels of administrative authority," with a moderately positive chi square at the .01 level.

.....
Insert Table 2 about here
.....

The five items in Table 3 show that size was perceived as negatively affecting "Availability of educational resources, particularly library facilities," and "Depth and variety of course offerings." The two items are the only ones in the entire survey that received mean scores of less that 3 on the 5 point scales. Both items scored somewhat lower in the 1983 survey, but no statistically significant difference was revealed in the chi squares for these items. Slippage in positiveness was revealed in responses to "Availability of human resources, particularly well-qualified teachers," with a moderately significant chi square at the .01 level. "Availability of an adequate school plant" remained practically the same from 1973 to 1983 with mean scores of 3.66 and 3.63. The most noticeable shift of opinion occurred in "Availability of varied racial and economic mixtures in the school population," with a significantly less positive score in 1983 at the .001 level.

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Insert Table 3 about here
.....

Comments solicited on the 1983 survey were categorized and tabulated, as follows:

POSITIVE COMMENTS

Number Commenting	Comment
161	Close personal relationships between teacher and students; parent and community support
105	Good pupil/teacher ratio; opportunities for individual attention
8	Isolation from world's problems
49	Small classes
30	Student participation in all activities
8	Good discipline
6	Ideal learning situations

NEGATIVE COMMENTS

Number Commenting	Comment
141	Narrow curriculum
27	Little exposure to outside ideas; too homogeneous of a population
25	Students spread too thin in activity participation
66	Financial limitations
5	Lack of quality students and bad influence of poor students
46	Gossip; poor quality of teachers; teachers teach too many subjects; lack of organization; lazy students

Change has occurred since 1973. Four of the schools in the 1973 survey are no longer listed in the 1982-83 Texas School Directory. The remaining schools continue to serve their unique functions. Most are geographically isolated in the "wide open spaces" and provide educational opportunity to a population that would otherwise not be served . Many of the schools also are centers of civic and cultural activity. It seems evident that the surveys and the comments of teachers and administrators in these very small secondary schools show a considerable confidence in the life and vitality of these institutions.

Table 1
Teaching and Quality of Education in a Small School

Response scale: (1)=Completely disagree, (2)=Disagree, (3)= Neutral, (4)=Agree, and (5)=Completely Agree

1. Teaching in a small school is not really different in any meaningful way from teaching in a large school.

	(1) C.D.	(2) D.	(3) Neu.	(4) A.	(5) C.A.	Mean	Chi Square
1973%	18	41	1	20	9	2.62	10.5541 p = >.01
1983%	20	47	9	17	6	2.41	

2. Small schools can provide a reasonable quality of education now and in the next two decades.

	(1) C.D.	(2) D.	(3) Neu.	(4) A.	(5) C.A.	Mean	Chi Square
1973%	0	6	6	36	51	4.32	21.4607 p = >.001
1983%	1	1	2	45	52	4.46	

3. Given normal change and adequate support, I can see the typical small school functioning beyond the year 2000.

	(1) C.D.	(2) D.	(3) Neu.	(4) A.	(5) C.A.	Mean	Chi Square
1973%	5	8	10	41	36	3.95	25.2056 p = >.001
1983%	0	4	8	43	45	4.28	

4. The small size of a school must necessarily make its curriculum limited.

	(1) C.D.	(2) D.	(3) Neu.	(4) A.	(5) C.A.	Mean	Chi Square
1973%	13	34	9	38	5	2.87	9.57332 p = >.01
1983%	14	38	13	33	3	2.73	

5. If my child attended a very small secondary school he/she could receive an adequate education.

	(1) C.D.	(2) D.	(3) Neu.	(4) A.	(5) C.A.	Mean	Chi Square
1973%	1	2	6	37	53	4.39	Not Significant
1983%	1	1	6	42	51	4.41	

Table 2

Effects of School Size on Relationships and Support

Question: What effect (in your opinion) do the size and location of your school have upon the following?

Response scale: (1) = Definitely negative effect (bad influence, (2) = Negative effect, (3) = Neutral, (4) = Positive effect, (5) = Definitely positve effect (good influence)

1. Close teacher-pupil relationships

	(1) D.N.	(2) N.E.	(3) Neu.	(4) P.E.	(5) D.P.	Mean	Chi Square
1973%	0	0	1	31	67	4.64	Not Significant
1983%	0	0	1	35	64	4.60	

2. Probability of having small classes

	(1) D.N.	(2) N.E.	(3) Neu.	(4) P.E.	(5) D.P.	Mean	Chi Square
1973%	0	1	4	34	60	4.52	8.52057 p = >.01
1983%	0	1	5	27	71	4.70	

3. Favorable community support of the school

	(1) D.N.	(2) N.E.	(3) Neu.	(4) P.E.	(5) D.P.	Mean	Chi Square
1973%	0	3	7	43	47	4.33	Not Significant
1983%	1	2	8	52	37	4.21	

4. Close pupil-pupil relationships

	(1) D.N.	(2) N.E.	(3) Neu.	(4) P.E.	(5) D.P.	Mean	Chi Square
1973%	0	1	7	45	47	4.37	8.46954 p = >.01
1983%	0	2	7	52	39	4.27	

5. Ability to change policy without going through several levels of administrative authority

	(1) D.N.	(2) N.E.	(3) Neu.	(4) P.E.	(5) D.P.	Mean	Chi Square
1973%	2	6	21	45	25	3.84	11.0125 p = >.01
1983%	4	5	29	46	17	3.67	

Table 3

Effects of School Size on Availability of Resources

(Same question and response scale as Table 2)

1. Availability of human resources, particularly well-qualified teachers

	(1) D.N.	(2) N.E.	(3) Neu.	(4) P.E.	(5) D.P.	Mean	Chi Square
1973%	0	16	34	34	15	3.47	11.8317 p = >.01
1983%	4	20	26	39	13	3.42	

2. Availability of educational resources, particularly library facilities

	(1) D.N.	(2) N.E.	(3) Neu.	(4) P.E.	(5) D.P.	Mean	Chi Square
1973%	7	35	21	27	10	2.99	Not Significant
1983%	9	36	24	22	9	2.84	

3. Availability of an adequate school plant

	(1) D.N.	(2) N.E.	(3) Neu.	(4) P.E.	(5) D.P.	Mean	Chi Square
1973%	1	13	28	34	24	3.66	Not Significant
1983%	2	14	28	32	25	3.63	

4. Depth and variety of course offerings

	(1) D.N.	(2) N.E.	(3) Neu.	(4) P.E.	(5) D.P.	Mean	Chi Square
1973%	9	45	22	18	6	2.66	Not Significant
1983%	9	47	24	16	5	2.61	

5. Availability of varied racial and economic mixtures in the school population.

	(1) D.N.	(2) N.E.	(3) Neu.	(4) P.E.	(5) D.P.	Mean	Chi Square
1973%	4	13	40	24	19	3.42	29.65 p = >.001
1983%	3	14	54	19	10	3.19	